

Viewfinders

Next Club Meeting: Wednesday May 2nd, 2007, 7:30 - 9:30 pm
Cupertino Room, Quinlan Center, 10185 N. Stelling Rd., Cupertino, CA

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April Meeting Highlights

The main feature of the April meeting was the screening of the new club quarterly video contest based on a given theme.

Frank Swanson continued his "Tips and Tricks" regular club meeting feature.

Theme Contest "Water"

Wow, what a success! We had 14 video entries for this, the first of the new quarterly "Themed" competition and I had my fingers crossed hoping for a half-dozen. Terrific! Let's hope we can keep it up with following contests.

Based on the given theme "Water", where club members were invited to submit short videos that showcased the subject in any way they wanted, the movies ranged geographically from Northern Europe to California, from Washington to Antarctica, and

from just a splash to the wide oceans. All were entertaining and some showed great imagination in script, photography and editing.

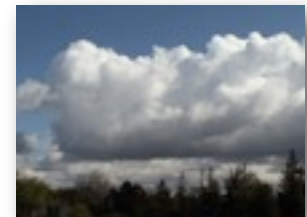
We allowed for six winners but in the event there was a tie for sixth place so this quarter we have seven winners. Among the entries were: **Fred Pfost's** amusing video of a dog smart enough not to get wet in the family swimming pool, **Irv Webster's** documentary, initially filmed in 16mm, of a fishing expedition in San Pablo Bay, **Stan Smith's** striking night views of the water fountains of Washington, **Betty Picket's** voyage through Northern Europe's Kiel Canal, **Bill Mannion's** slideshow, "Waters Edge", **Gordon Peterson's** demonstration of kayaking on Cunningham Lake, and **John Dietrich's** super-short movie "How To Video."

Most of the entries had been shot prior to the contest's announcement, which is acceptable, but special kudos goes to those that shot footage specifically for the contest. One of the most important points of the exercise is to encourage all of us to take a look at the subject, search for angles, and figure what we can come up with that is fresh or unexpected. In this way we can stretch our imaginations and

skills and add something new to our library of videos.

The winners were:

First Place: "Rain" by Jack Gorham.



This exquisite movie, beautifully photographed and edited, captures the story of a rain storm as it approaches, breaks, and falls on the land. Rain drops fall on roofs and puddles and gurgles down gutter downspouts. Insects in the garden are caught in the shower and rain falls against windows. Jack wrote and narrated a poem for the soundtrack which perfectly complemented the visuals. Well done, Jack.

Second Place: "Downeaster" by Brian Lucas. Blending stills using the



Continued from page 1

"Ken Burns" effect with video shot on the Pacific coast at Princeton Harbor, this movie acts as a pean to hard working fishermen everywhere and the dangers and hardships they face as they follow the trade of their fore-fathers.

Third Place: "Water, Water, Everywhere" by Virginia Mishoff. Shot on



a trip to Antarctica, this movie offers seals, penguins, rough and treacherous seas, fjords and glaciers and follows the trail of a party of tourist to the region. Excellent photography and editing, plus vast expanses of rock and ice that's certain to deliver the "Brrrr" factor.

Fourth Place: "Water" by Bob Meacham. Highly imaginative, this short movie catches us by surprise when the simple act of pouring a drink is stymied by uncooperative ice



cubes. By applying a few clever editing techniques, Bob shows us how to take a simple idea and have us saying, "Wow! How did he do that?"

Fifth Place: "Yosemite Water Works" by Bernie Ward. The river, lakes, and



waterfalls are showcased in this portrait of Yosemite National Park and the pleasures that it brings to park visitors. A great reminder of what a treasure we have so close to home.

Sixth Place was shared between "Sea Credits" by Frank Swanson, and **"Wonderful Waterfalls of Yosemite"** by Janet Holl. Frank's video demonstrates how to take a long list of



credits and place them against a background that keeps them from becoming wearisome to read. Janet's video was also shot in Yosemite and concentrates on the waterfalls in full seasonal flood. A magnificent sight.

The next Themed Contest is scheduled to be screened at our July meeting and the subject is "American Liberty". So let's get our thinking caps on and see if we can match or surpass the quality (and quantity) of the April showing.



Good luck!

VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

MAY MEETING MEMBERS' VIDEO NIGHT

Here's an opportunity to to check through your video collection and dust off that movie you shot, oh so long ago, that caused you to reckon that you had Alfred Hitchcock or Jaques Cousteau beat. Or you may want to surprise us with something new, something that we haven't seen before. Either way, it's important to bring something to the meeting to prove that we amateur movie makers don't just watch them. we make them.

My wife is a dancer, dancing with a local dance team and as well as designing the sets for their biannual shows I am asked to video them. My

previous efforts were not good having only a still camera tripod which, although sturdy, was hopeless for smooth pans. Then I bought a fluid head job. What a difference! It's as smooth as silk and pans look fantastic. For around \$80, which is what

mine cost, I heartily recommend any member seriously considering a purchase if they don't have one.

For the next "Themed Contest I'll work up a better score card where creativity is a major consideration.

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR APRIL 2007

Bank Account Beginning 3/31/07	\$977.65
Income Total	\$ 25.00
DVD Sales (5)	\$25.00
Expenses Total	\$20.00
DVD Production (5)	\$20.00
Bank Account Ending 4/30/07	\$982.65



Frank Swanson, Treasurer for 2007



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Live from Las Vegas! I am currently in Las Vegas to attend the NAB (National Association of Broadcasters) Convention. It is the second largest convention in Las Vegas and includes products, demonstrations and exhibits from the largest video shooting, capturing, editing and publishing companies in the business.

Having spent a couple of days walking around the show and sitting in on demonstrations, training and playing with some of the tools of the trade, I thought you might be interested in what was presented.

First, this show is aimed not at consumer products but at professional end users. Studio cameras, broadcast trucks, high-end editing gear is the norm. But, it does cross over into the high level consumer area in a lot of areas. Manufacturers like Sony and Canon have huge display areas that have entire broadcast studios set up with their entire line of cameras that you can operate and play with as if you worked in a TV studio. Companies like Apple and Adobe have large areas where you can watch demonstrations of their editing products as well as taking training classes (at a terminal) on a particular product or skill. Around their booth areas are the Third Party companies that make plug-ins for these products. Microphone companies, Steadicam and similar products, high volume disc burners and printers, protective bags and rack mount systems providers are all there. And the list goes on.

Looking around the show the most obvious thing was all of the emphasis on HD in cameras, displays and editing gear. Most professionals are moving to HD for improved image quality for broadcast and playback. What was still missing for someone at our

level was any wide array of HD burners and DVD players in either format, Blue-Ray or HD-DVD. That part is still lagging behind the camera/broadcast curve. However, it did not diminish my enjoyment of the show and of spending time in Las Vegas.

When the playback equipment catches up, the cameras and editing tools will be in place for amateurs like ourselves to make our videos even more visually incredible. The good news is the trickle down from the professional level to the amateur level. Most editing software companies are including new editing tools in their entry level products. Look for being able to do more with each new update of your editing software. But also don't forget you are still required to learn the basic skills of good camera and editing techniques to take advantage of these new tools.

Let's go shoot and edit some video!

Viewfinders CROSSWORD Puzzle

By Frank Swanson

ACROSS:

- 4. Motion picture observation device
- 7. Intensity of light entering camera lens
- 8. Motion picture
- 11. City home of Viewfinders
- 14. Arranger of video clips
- 15. Shifting focus within a single shot
- 16. Camera part that concentrates light
- 17. Portable electronic recording device

DOWN:

- 1. Picture portion of a movie
- 2. Visual attribute of light
- 3. Person who practices videography
- 5. Sound portion of a movie
- 6. Effects applied to video or audio clips
- 9. On screen text such as credits
- 10. Extra no-charge videography tools
- 11. Short media files containing video and audio
- 12. Three-legged supporting camera stand
- 13. To adjust lens to make image appear sharp

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A column intended to include video techniques, news of interest, or random bits of relevant information. Members are encouraged to submit items.

Cupertino Elementary Endowment Foundation hosts the ePic Student Film Festival



(From the West San Jose Resident. Photo: Jaqueline Ramseyer)

Third Grade teacher Susan Woods and students from Nimitz Elementary School utilize eMovie to compete in the contest theme, "What everyone should know." Festival held at Miller middle School in West San Jose April 28th.

Sunnyvale farmer dies; love for open land captured by amateur film maker



Joseph Anthony Francia spent more than 65 years growing apricots and vegetables and sold the produce at his roadside stand, The Corn Palace on Lawrence Expressway. Craig vonWaaden, produced a splendid documentary, *Million Dollar Dirt* chronicling the changing land use that involved elements of population growth, land development, technological progress, wealth, and even greed. In an interview, Francia expressed doubt that agriculture has a future in one time *Valley of Hearts Delight*.

SCREENWRITING AT



By Jack Gorham

I attended some of the events at San Jose's Cinequest Film Festival this year; one of them was the "Day of the Writer" Forum.

The Day of the Writer focused on Screenwriting and was composed of three parts.

Screenwriting Essentials:

This forum was presented by San Jose State University professor Scotty Sublett, who teaches beginners. He talked about the following points:

- *Need a Right Idea:* An idea that is writable and has conflict. Is it writable by me? Write what you know.
- *Spine Formula*
 1. Hook - It must have a story that an audience would be interested in.
 2. Hero - It must have one person who wants something and goes after it.
 3. Goal - There must be a goal - a strong desire
 4. Central Conflict - (this fuels drama) Someone wants one thing, another person wants another thing. If the conflict is with with one person, he/she must externalize his conflict; who and where does he/she spend most of his time with?
 5. Central Question - Make it clear what that person is waiting to find out or learn before he meets the goal.

• *Dramatic Structure*

Linearity - A leads to B to C to D, etc. One scene leads to the next - this holds the audience attention. Discussion scenes that are used to get information out to the audience are boring. Linearity moves naturally, from conflict to conflict, with no transitions.
 Act 1 - Setup - This clues in the audience as to who is the hero, his goal, what/ who is the central conflict and poses the central questions
 Act 2 - Developing conflict - This is the major part of your story, the complications, twists, problems
 Act 3 - Climax - This part shows whether he reaches his goal or not and wrap up loose ends if needed; why certain things happened or what happened to the major persons.

Screenwriting Essentials in Action:

This section of the forum was given by James Dalessandro, who teaches screenwriting at Fort Mason, in San Francisco.

Once you know the structure of screenwriting, then you can break the rules - which gives your films a twist, makes them unique and unexpected. One current theory is that you can't write a scene that goes 3 - 4 minutes without interruption. In the film clip of *Sling Blade*, there is a 7 minute scene that is very powerful. Other films that break the rules included *Usual Suspects*, *American Beauty* and *Network* (which he said was the best screen play written). In *Butch Cassidy & The Sundance Kid*, they turned a western movie into a comedy. Some of the best conflicts are those with different or opposite styles. Study and research are necessary for effective screenwriting. Write to show emotion. The audience must care about your subject. In the movie *Network*, there is the greatest monologue ever. In the clip, the monologue tells a very descriptive story, not just facts, but real details that builds tension and has real connection.

Interviewing a Master Screenwriter:

Christopher McQuarrie is the screenwriter for *The Usual Suspects* which won the Academy Award for Best Screenplay in 1995. He talked about his movie *The Usual Suspects*. No studio wanted to do the picture, so he got together a group of investors who put up the money to film it. Then he had trouble getting the cast together. It opened in 20 theaters nationwide; then later went to 800. Once they got their money back, the picture was pulled and made into a video which was a bigger hit. He also talked about his movie story *Alexander the Great*. The studio only wanted one actor and that was Leonardo De Caprio. Leonardo would only play if directed by Martin Scorsese. By the time things got worked out, someone else had already made such a movie and released it.

Travel and Videography in India

By Gordon Peterson

I traveled on Korean Air from San Francisco to Seoul Korea, then from Seoul to Bombay (Mumbai) India where I met Bart Wittekind and his wife from Bangkok, Thailand. The first leg of the flight was on a Boeing 777-200I where I had the good fortune to have an empty center seat which is wider than on the 747s that I had previously flown. We touched down at 2:00 in the morning. I had arranged, through the hotel I had booked, for a taxi to pick me up. At the airport I first encountered the relentless graft and on the take motive that seemed to be everywhere I travelled in India. After clearing immigration and customs, I found the guard at the exit busy extracting "tips" from Indians but he didn't attempt to shake me down. I found a driver who had my name spelled incorrectly. As we headed for his cab, another fellow fell in with me and started to chat. I asked him if he was "Khalis," which was the driver's name I was emailed to expect. He said he was, but he lied. He wanted money for "guiding me to the taxi". I didn't realize his deception until the real driver loaded my suitcase into the taxi and the other guy walked away. My "Lone Plant" guide recommended an economy room at \$50 a day with air conditioning. It was on the second floor, accessed by an ancient elevator like those you see in old movies with the slanting safety grills that expand across the doorway. The room had a double bed, tile floor,



western toilet, shower (but no shower curtain), hot water between 8 -10:00 am, screenless windows, dim electric-saving fluorescent lights, no toilet paper and a Gandhi-approved 2" thick worn cotton mattress on wooden slats. I layered the two mattresses together but it was still very hard. The slat boards would fall out during the night and clatter loudly on the floor, leaving a gap under the mattress, but luckily I didn't fall through. This same type of room, without air conditioning, was about \$10 at other locations.

We took a taxi tour of Bombay. The roads were thick with people, bicycles, auto-rickshaws, crank-rickshaws (human powered bicycles), taxies, cars, trucks, hand pushed two wheeled freight carts about 12 feet long by 2 feet wide, loaded with what ever. The roads seldom had lane lines and where they did they were only rough guides. In India you drive by the horn, which has the shrill squawky sound of early Japanese

imports. Most vehicles had a sign telling the followers to sound their horn, and they did! The racket was unnerving. Pedestrians had no right of way. If someone ventured out in front of you, just sound the horn and charge on. I'm surprised that no one was killed, but somehow we missed, by a hair, those in the road. It might be a child, old person, dog, cow, water buffalo, donkey or bus, it didn't matter.

Whichever tourist sites we visited there were swarms of guides waiting to escort you. Saying "no" had zero effect; they continued to follow and beg you to use their services. The same was true of all vendors, especially post card sellers. They stuck to you like horse flies, trying to sell you their wares. It was very annoying and I had to face them at each monument. Even leaving the hotel required running the gauntlet of pleading taxi drivers. Behind any friendly face or kind word was someone trying to extract money, which made me feel



Photos: Top- Gate to India. Above- Elephanta caves entrance, Indian girls, Elephanta relief, Ox cart

that I could trust no one. There were, however, a few occasions when I was genuinely helped and not taken for a monetary cleansing.

Most of the people in the streets seemed poor. The buildings were shabby and run down. There were people sleeping in the streets and trash was strewn everywhere. The pictures in the travel book must have been taken 50 years ago, or else enhanced.

One of the best places we visited was a pleasant house that Gandhi used during the early 1900s and it contained many pictures of him. One room had dioramas of special events in his life. There were life-sized pictures and sculptures as well as a library of information about Gandhi. I was allowed to video there and found it quite absorbing.

It is very disappointing to find out that video taking at almost every building, mosque, fort, museum or monument is either prohibited, or it requires a special permit that costs about 50 cents, but may be very limited. Still photography is allowed except for using flash. I asked if I could use the still photo feature of my camcorder, but even that was denied. When I asked why video was limited and still photos were not, I was told that video had been commercially exploited. I think they feared that if people could see video they might not come to see the sights. At the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay/Mumbai, videography was restricted to shooting the outside of the building. They provided audio guides, which were good, but not inclusive of the displays. I was unable to video the many elegant things there but I could have taken still shots.

One day we took a 6 mile ferry ride from the Gateway of India monument, built to commemorate the visit of King George V in 1911, to Elephanta Island. From the ferry we had a fine view of the Gateway monument, backed by the Taj Mahal Hotel. The ferry landed at a causeway that ran for some 500 yards out into the sea. Luckily there was a small train that chugged along to haul the tourists to the shore for about a dollar each. Most places there was a tourist price and an Indian price, at about 10 times cheaper. Near the end of causeway at a boat dock, men

dressed only in loin-cloths and white turbans carried rocks on their heads from a



small wooden boat, with an ancient lateen sail, to the shore. They dumped the rocks in a pile to be hand crushed into small stones to be used in construction. The island's attraction was an ancient excavated cave temple dedicated to Shiva, created around 500AD. The name came from a large solid rock-shaped elephant that once stood on the site (it was removed to Bombay and placed in a park there. It is so weathered that it is now barely recognizable). The cave temple is reached by way of 125 steep steps leading to the top of the hill. My friend, Bart, has an artificial leg, so he hired a chair to carry him up. This was a standard wooden chair attached to two bamboo poles and carried by four men. It cost him about \$10 for the trip. As we neared the temple we were allowed to video the outside of the cave, but not the inside. They even objected if we shot from the outside into the inside. One of the government guides we met on the boat had said that videoing was prohibited, but that she would see if we could get special approval or sneak some video when other tourists were not around, by paying the guards stationed around the site. She disappeared after we arrived and I decided not to risk a problem so I haven't any interior shots. I bought some photo books that I thought I could use to tell the story. The caves had some marvelous sculpted reliefs of Shiva and deities from Hindu beliefs. The solid rock had been excavated to leave an area with sides 131 feet tall and 24 ornate solid rock columns to create a vast hall. Within the hall, shrines were also carved out of the rock and in the walls were other entrances, framed with carved pillars, leading to alcoves with deeply carved reliefs. There were other caves, but these were closed as they were unsafe and awaiting restoration. Lower down on

the hill men were shaping rocks to be used, apparently, in the restoration. Monkeys roamed freely along the pathways looking for food but warnings were posted not to feed them. They showed no fear of humans, but went about as though they were in charge.

On our return I climbed up to the upper deck of the ferry, for which privilege I was charged an extra 25 cents. While there I had a conversation with a guide. He had worked for the regional government and had been required to retire at 55. Persons who work for the national government had to retire at 60. His wife had been working for a company that cut back its work force and offered the employees the choice of a golden handshake or transfer. She took the golden handshake, which worked well for a while because interest rates were high enough to get a good income from it. Then the interest rate went way down and both he and she had to find work to support themselves. He also talked about some of his friends who had children in the US. They had moved to the US for their children's sakes but found themselves very lonely and missing India. He also said that one of his friends had applied for citizenship in the US because his children wanted him to come, but when he was asked why, he answered because his children wanted him to. His request was denied but he was happy not to go.

To be continued.

April Quiz - Answer.

O	A	C	K	H	M	Y	R	E
H	Y	E	A	C	R	M	K	O
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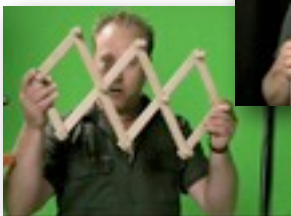
TECH TIPS

By Frank Swanson

At the end of each monthly general meeting of the Viewfinders Club, I've been presenting a short video clip from **Digital Juice** that provides you good information and practical tips for expanding your knowledge of camcorders, shooting techniques, audio recording, editing tricks and tips, or post-production tools.

This past month of April we screened Digital Juice's "Shedding Light on the Secret of Shadows" which showed us how to create some simple shadows to spice up your shots. This 6-minute video explained the term "cookies" which are lighting accessories in the world of movie-making. Other terms for just about the same thing are a "cucalorus" [a small plate of metal with shapes cut into it and inserted in an ellipsoidal spotlight] and a "gobo" [which is short for "go between" a light source and a subject]. Whether you want to create tree leaves, windows, doorways or random patterns of light, a batch of homemade cookies may be just what you need to make your next shoot mmmmm good (pun intended)! Here are four tips to help you produce some nice shadows for your next production:

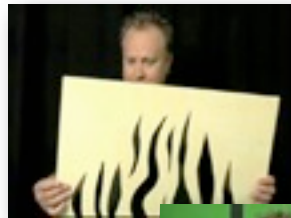
1. Cookie Materials: cookies can be made from just about any material so long as it's rigid. For example, an old box that's been opened-up will do just fine and it's free, rigid poster-board or a piece of white foamcore board 20" x 30" (which is my favorite and costs



about a buck when on sale at Michaels). Large sheets of standard paper are just too flimsy. Whatever you choose, the cookie

needs to be clamped in place and rigid stuff works just fine.

2. Cookie Patterns: there are some common patterns that are frequently used in movies and TV shows. They are: window blinds, stars, geometric shapes, or just random patterns. You



can make your own window pattern with strips of foam board taped

together to form the cross sections that most windows have. A limb off a tree, a house plant, or just about any object that casts a shadow can be used as a cookie.

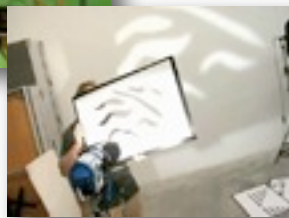


3. Where to Place the Cookie: to use a cookie effectively, you need to use a hard light source with no diffusion to soften the edges of the shadow. Add a gel in front of the light if you want to add some color to the mix. The distance from the cookie to the light



source will determine the sharpness of the shadow. The farther

you get the cookie from the light source the sharper the edges around the shadow; conversely, the closer you get the cookie to the light source the softer (i.e. more blurred) the shadow edges will appear.



4. How to Mount the Cookie: use some kind of sturdy stand like the ones used for lights that have attached clamps. If you don't have a stand, use a tall tripod and securely tape the cookie to it, or use a small ladder that you can move around to

position the cookie for the effect you want. Be sure the cookie isn't visible in the shot though.

5. What about a Gobo? Whereas a cookie projects a distinct pattern on a set or subject, a gobo usually just blocks the light in sections. A gobo can be a set piece that you shoot through to provide foreground framing. A partial window frame or door frame between the camera and the subject provides interesting foreground framing and shadowing effects. You can use tree branches, curtains or any other object in the foreground as a gob, but you'll need to use your camera's manual focus to keep your subject in sharp view.



You've probably never paid any attention to shadows in the movies you see, but now you'll know what to look for. Try to figure out how the shadows were generated and where the "cookie" or "gobo" was placed on the set.

Sometimes it's the little things that turn a good production into a great production. Using "cookies" and "gobos" will add that little extra to the atmosphere of your settings and make your productions more realistic and professional looking.



See these tips on your computer by going to www.digitaljuice.com, click on "DJTV" on the top of your screen, click on the "search" tab, type in "shadow" and hit carriage return. Up will pop "Production Notes: Shedding Light on the Secret of Shadows". Click the "run" arrow in the clip's window to the left and sit back. I'll pick another one for screening at our May meeting, so be sure to come and see my choice for next time.

CREDITS

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Viewfinder Newsletter is published during the third week of each month for Viewfinders Camcorder Club of Cupertino members.

Please send announcements and articles for submission to the publisher during the two weeks previous to the following monthly issue. Send address and email corrections to the publisher.

MONTHLY CLUB MEETINGS

Held in the Cupertino Room, Quinlan Center. 10188 N. Stelling Road, Cupertino, California. Watch the calendar for programs updates. Admission is free.

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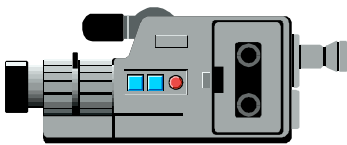
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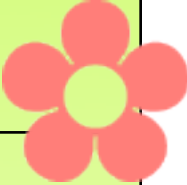
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2007	
<p>JAN</p> <p>Jan 3 Meeting: "10 Best of the West" and NCCAMA movies screenings. Jan 5th San Jose Meeting: "Gorillas..."</p>	<p>FEB</p> <p>Feb 7 Meeting: Fred Pfof on "The History of Video Tape"</p> <p>Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p> 
<p>MARCH</p> <p>March 14 Meeting: John Dietrich on "Matting and Chromakey Techniques"</p> <p>Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p>APRIL</p> <p>April 4 Meeting: Members Quarterly Short Video Competition screening. Theme: "Water"</p> <p>Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p>MAY 2, Wednesday</p> <p>Meeting: Club Members Video Screening Night.</p> <p>Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p>JUNE 5, Tuesday</p> <p>Meeting: Inter-club Exchange Night (still to be confirmed)</p> <p>Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p>JULY 11, Wednesday</p> <p>Meeting: Mountain View Student Video Festival</p> <p>Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p>AUG 1, Wednesday</p> <p>Meeting: Panel Discussion of "Audio in Video: Microphones, Capturing, Editing and Voice-overs"</p> <p>Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p>SEPT 11, Tuesday</p> <p>(Meeting to be determined)</p> <p>Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p>OCT 3, Wednesday</p> <p>Meeting: Club Annual Video Contest screenings.</p> <p>Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>
<p>NOV 7, Wednesday</p> <p>Meeting: Annual Gold DVD Awards and Social.</p> <p>Tech Tips: Frank Swanson</p>	<p>DEC</p> <p>No meeting this month</p> 